ANG Bayan
Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

English Edition
Vol LIII No. 14
July 21, 2022
www.cpp.ph



EDITORIAL

Resist Marcos' war intensification amid crisis

Appearance and airs aside, the US-Marcos regime is no different in essence from the previous US-Duterte regime when it comes to fundamental economic, political and social issues. Like the previous tyrant, Marcos represents the interests of foreign imperialists and the local ruling classes. In the face of the intensifying crisis, Marcos' response is to intensify the war against the people.

Marcos promotes and perpetuates policies and laws that are anti-worker and anti-peasant, and oppress ordinary Filipinos. The militarist mentality still prevails, and the oppressive and brutal fascist-terrorist war continues to rage against people who are resisting and defending their rights.

Military and security officials recently declared that they will push for the worn out "localized peace talks" that merely serves to camouflage the massive war of repression and pacification against the masses to force them to give up their land defense and struggle for agrarian reforms. This is in line with the so-called "peace economy" that seeks to pave the way for large foreign multinational corporations to take over the remaining land for mining operations and plantations. American companies aim to control about 300,000 thousand hectares of land in Mindanao. Thus, "localized peace talks" will exacerbate, not solve, the greatest problem of landlessness and oppression of the peasant masses that are the cause of widespread poverty and hunger in the countryside.

To achieve "peace" for foreign multinational corporations, the reactionary military and police will subject the masses to intensified intelligence, intimidation, psy-ops and large-scale combat operations. People suffer from hamletting of villages, movement restrictions, food blockades and other forms oppression. Aerial bombing, strafing and shelling in conjunction with the AFP's large-scale military operations cause widespread terror and endanger the people's lives.

This scheme by the National Task Force (NTF)-Elcac also serves as milking cow for military officers who pocket millions of pesos in kickbacks in the "surrender" fund and partnership in contracts to pave roads (so-called "farm-to-market roads") and construction of various infrastructures.

Marcos turns a blind eye to the social and economic roots of the people's revolutionary armed resistance, especially the main issue of land reform. To justify its refusal to revive peace talks with the revolutionary movement's national leadership, the regime denies that the armed struggle that is steadily advancing throughout the archipelago is rooted in problems affecting the entire country.

People's sufferings will be exacerbated by Marcos' desire to continue along the neoliberal path that for decades has led the country from one crisis to another. These policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (IMF-WB) have crippled the Philippine economy so much that it can no longer stand on its own two feet, and made it highly dependent on foreign investments and loans, and on imported food and other necessities.

Recent years saw the accelerated decline of the economy and people's lives. The country floats in debt and survives on dollar remittances. The peso's value against the dollar, and the amount that people's money can buy, continue to depreciate. The state has become bankrupt as a result of corporate tax cuts to attract foreign capitalists, worsening corruption with grandiose infrastructure, and military and police overspending.

A slew of taxes are being planned to be imposed on the people in order to repay debts and borrow more. Workers' low wages will be repressed to serve big capitalist interests. Tens of thousands of farmers are set to be driven away from lands being cleared for foreign companies. To "save money," thousands of government employees are set to be fired, while bureaucrats pocket large salaries and kickbacks. Millions are unemployed, and everywhere the toiling masses are tormented by soaring prices of food and petroleum products, and are deprived of their livelihood.

The Marcos regime is playing deaf to people's grievances. People are muzzled and their cries drowned out. Their right to assemble in the streets is being taken away by intimidation and repression in order to prevent the rise of people's militant protests. Marcos is terrified that people's strikes and uprisings would break out amid severe crisis. Marcos and his military and police are employing all-out fascist restrictions to stop the escalation and advance of the people's resistance.

Threats of the Philippine crisis erupting, while the Marcos regime ignores the people's grievances, leave the Filipino people with no option but to intensify all forms of resistance. Different sectors must unite to fight for their immediate demands for higher wages, lower prices, free education and health services and more. They must organize stronger militant protest actions from factories, communities and universities to plazas and streets.

In the countryside, the only path for the peasant masses is to unite and advance various forms of struggle for land and defend their rights against fascist repression. They must vigorously oppose worsening forms of exploitation that take away the wealth cultivated by their sweat and blood, and fight the companies that grab land, and plunder and destroy the environment.

As shown during the Marcos I dictatorship, waging revolutionary armed struggle is the most effective means of defending the interests of the masses and fighting the war of suppression against the people. We must multiply the number of Red fighters throughout the country, expand and increase the guerrilla fronts and launch widespread and intensive tactical offensives. AB



ANG Bayan

Vol LIII No. 14 | July 21, 2022

Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray, English and Spanish. Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper.

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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines

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Military abducts 4 organizers, peasant couple

Four activists and organizers were abducted by state armed forces last May and June according to recent reports of Kilusang Mayo Uno and Gabriela. In addition, the 94th IB abducted a peasant couple in Himamaylan City this month.

Victims Elizabeth "Loi" Magbanua and Alipio "Ador" Juat, both workers' organizers, remain missing since May 3. They were last seen in Barangay Punturin, Valenzuela City after attending a meeting. Elgene Mungcal of Gabriela Women's Partylist and Ma. Elena "Cha" Cortez Pampoza of Anakpawis are also still missing since being abducted last July 3. They were last seen at Winfare Supermarket, Moncada, Tarlac.

In Negros Occidental, the 94th IB abducted peasant couple Gerald Ganti and Dalen Alipo-on, both members of the Mahalang Farmer's Association, in Sitio Mambalayong, Barangay Mahalang, Himamaylan City last July 15. Soldiers barged into and ransacked the couple's house.

Killing. Peasant Pompeo Landisa was killed last July 20 when the 62nd IB fired indiscriminately at Sitio Catuptop, Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental. Soldiers claim it was an encounter.

Arrests. Local police arrested Gary Campos, a Lumad-Manobo teacher, in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur last July 17. Police accosted him while travelling and detained him in Butuan City Police Station. Campos is a member of a Lumad organization defending the Andap Valley Complex against plunder.

On the same day, police illegally arrested on trumped-up charges civilian Charlie Saliganan in Barangay Poblacion, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental.

Meanwhile, Ramonito Mahinay was arrested on a trumped-up case of illegal possession of firearms last July 9 in Sitio Kamanggahan, Barangay Tabon, Vallehermoso.

Last July 6, the 79th IB arrested a civilian in Sitio Banwa Minatay, Barangay Marcelo, Calatrava, Negros Occidental. Earlier, soldiers fired indiscriminately at houses in the sitio, wounding a child.

In Oriental Mindoro, five civilians were illegally arrested by the police on trumped-up charges in Sitio Nara, Barangay Villa Pag-asa, Bansud last July 5. The victims were identified as Joel Raña Manis, Abegail Buendicho and couple Ricky and Sarah Hatulan, and another unidentified individual. They are being accused of being NPA members.

Harassment. Soldiers of the 542nd Engineering Battalion harassed the Mijares family at their home in Sitio Lagtapon, Barangay San Antonio, Himamaylan City last July 14. Last June 24, the same unit tried to abduct a 3-year old child of the Mijareses.

Meanwhile, last July 15, Althea Beatrice Papa, a national official of the Kabataan Partylist (KPL), was harassed and denied enrolment by the school administration in the University of Makati. She and the KPL were tagged "terrorists." AB

NPA-Mindoro ambushes 203rd IBde and police

SEVEN SOLDIERS WERE killed and four others were wounded in an ambush by the New People's Army-Mindoro against operating troops of the 203rd IBde and Special Action Force in Sitio Miyahe, Barangay Mambog, Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro last June 8.

The fascist troops were riding two six-by-six trucks when ambushed by Red fighters at 1 a.m. Said troops were part of a large-scale focused military operations in the area. AB

NDFP condemns killing of Mangyan child

CONI LEDESMA, HEAD of the Special Office for the Protection of Children of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, called for justice for a child killed by the 4th IB in Sitio Tauga Daka, Barangay San Vicente, Roxas, Oriental Mindoro last July 3.

The child died after soldiers and police rained bullets at the hut of Mr. Inyab, a minority Mangyan-Buhid in the said sitio. It was in retaliation after soldiers accidentally stepped on wild boar traps while scouting through Mr. Inyab's land. Soldiers claimed the child was killed in an encounter and arrested Mr. Inyab, an old woman and another child.

Ledesma asserted that soldiers must indemnify the victim's family as payment for the damages they caused and in violation of the international humanitarian law. AB

Cebu gov't demolishes 80 stalls in Carbon market

SUCCESSIVE OPERATIONS ON July 15 and 18 were undertaken by personnel of Cebu City's local government to demolish 80 stalls in Carbon Public Market's Unit II. These were in connection with the planned privatization of the said market under the Megawide Construction Corporation in partnership with the local government.

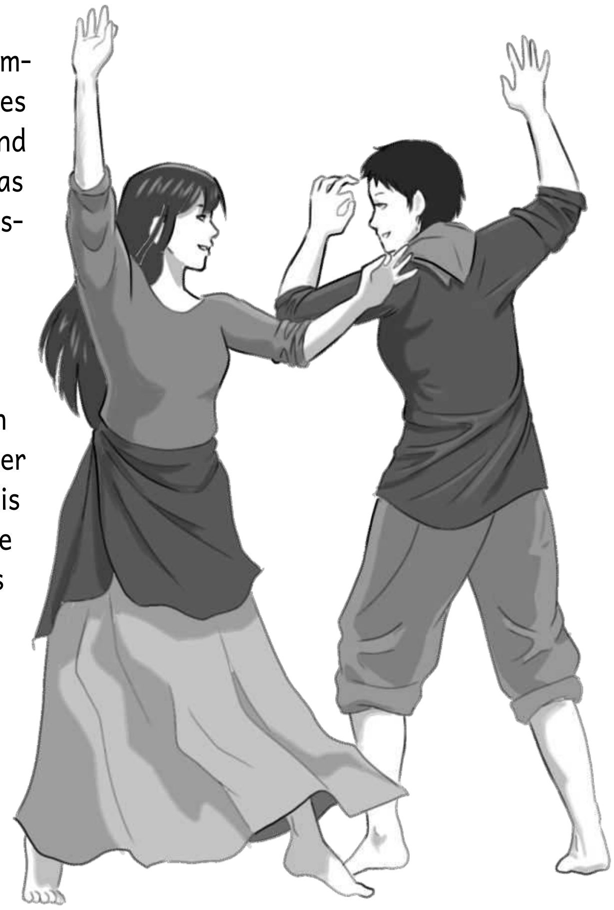
According to Carbonhanong Alyansa alang sa Reporma ug Bahandianong Ogma sa mga Nanginabuhi (CARBON), privatization will raise rental fees and make it exclusive to fewer vendors.

The demolition was carried out despite the barricades of vendors and their supporters.

About 12,000 vendors and workers will lose their rented spaces. In addition, around 700 houses will be demolished in nearby Sitio Bato, Barangay Ermita where new buildings will be constructed. AB

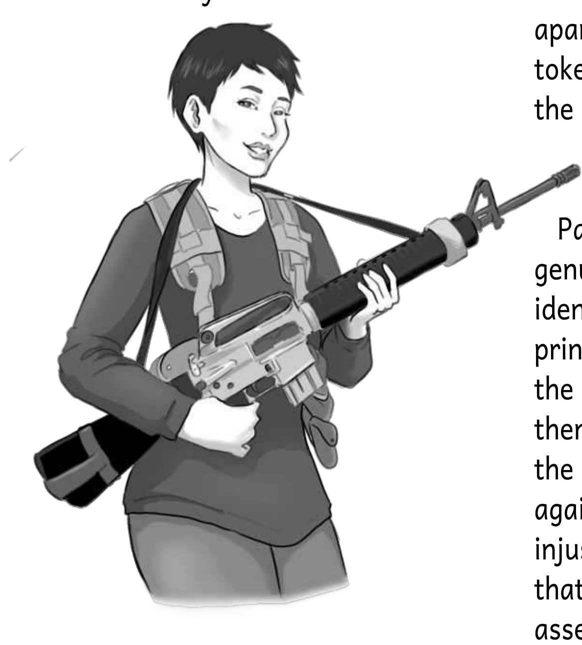
Challenges as a lesbian Red fighter

When asked what she considers her best experience as a member of the New People's Army (NPA), Ka Nica goofily shares about the time she danced with another girl in front of comrades and peasant masses. It is a big thing for her, she says, because it was the first time she felt visible not just as a Red fighter but as a lesbian in the people's army and revolutionary movement.



"It was always a custom in those parts that after mass work, the masses and the Red fighters would hold a cultural program. A courtship dance was one of the highlights of those events, and of course, it's traditionally a dance between a man and a woman. I almost fell off my seat when I heard my name being called on stage. As I sheepishly dragged my feet forward, the comrade who was the emcee said with some pride that I was a 'woman with the heart of a man.' And so another woman, a local resident, was also called on stage to dance with me! I was thrilled!"

Up until then, Ka Nica says she had never been completely comfortable being an "out" lesbian in the NPA, although her pixie cut and butch demeanor almost always gave her away. "I was never really in the closet. I just didn't feel like bringing up my gender orientation in every conversation. But that afternoon, among the gathered masses and fellow Red fighters, I felt genuinely okay with expressing who I really was."



When dealing with the biases she has encountered as a lesbian before and even after joining the NPA, Ka Nica is quick to clarify that while there are still prejudices in the people's army, they are nowhere as traumatizing as the kind she dealt with in bourgeois society.

She observes that while most capitalist countries give token acceptance to LGBTQ in recognizing same-sex marriages, bourgeois societies in essence are homophobic and rife with all forms of biases. "They may have made concessions with regards to marriage, but capitalism continues to victimize LGBTQ people in the workplace and in low-income communities, or with the prevalence of hate crimes and police brutality. It doesn't make sense to uphold one of our basic rights but oppress and terrorize us in everything else."

Ka Nica believes that what sets the national democratic revolution apart from bourgeois society's token acceptance is not merely that the Communist Party of the Philippines allows same-sex marriage, but also that the Party and the movement genuinely strive to respect gender identity and sexual orientation as a principle in the course of waging the people's war. "It's the fact that there is an on-going struggle within the struggle, a cultural revolution, against all forms of biases and injustices, not just gender-based, that spells the difference," she asserts.

In the NPA's daily grind and in doing mass work in communities in the countryside, Ka Nica says she witnesses the victories of this very struggle play out in small but surprising ways. "It's when comrades appreciate gay men and lesbians who hold the line during military actions, especially defensive ones where we are taken in surprise. Or during educational discussions when you see the light of understanding in the faces of comrades and peasant masses as you explain the effects of neoliberalism to the lives of the peasantry. Even in merely being a Red fighter who's risen above the sacrifices of Duterte's fascist counter-revolution. That's when they see you—a revolutionary, not just someone with a particular sexual orientation. What I learned is that the more I become a better comrade by performing my tasks, the more I become visible and champion the LGBTQ struggle."

When shades of prejudices do come up, Ka Nica takes them in stride. "It's an opportunity to

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NDF-SMR condemns eco-zone construction in Davao City's militarized areas

The National Democratic Front-Southern Mindanao Region (NDF-SMR) condemned the Duterte family's plan to construct an economic zone in the most militarized areas of Davao City. This shows that land grabbing is the real objective of then Davao City and now vice president Sara Duterte-Carpio's counterinsurgency campaign.

In the second week of July, the local government announced the conversion of a 25-hectare land in Barangay Daliao, Toril and an 80-hectare land in neighboring Bunawan and Tibungco, all in Davao City. Thousands of landless farmers and Lumads till these lands. Instead of awarding them the land they till, the Dutertes plans to construct an agro-industrial economic zone that will benefit bureaucrats (in the form of infrastructure kickbacks) and foreign companies.

These barangays were declared "insurgency-free" during the press conference of the 10th ID of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) last June 21. The declaration was made amid relentless militarization, massacres, killings, illegal arrests and detentions, intimidation, forced "surrenders" of civilians who are then forced to become members of so-called mass organizations.

Toril, in particular, has been subjected to intense militarization for over a decade. Last year, the 10th ID set up a fake farmers' organizations to help pave the way for commercial plantations and other foreign companies. The NDF-SMR calls the plan to build sweatshops here "bullshit." These will only exacerbate the problem of farmer's and Lumad's landlessness and will result in worse forms of exploitation of workers.

These "agro-industrial eco-zones" will transform productive agricultural lands to monocrop plantations and their processing and packaging plants, as well as tourist areas. These will dislocate farmers at once. In the long run, it will destroy the former productive soil due to the use of toxic chemicals (pesticides and others), like what happened in many Mindanao plantations.

Plans to construct eco-zones in other Lumad ancestral lands in other parts of the region are also underway. "In Talaingod, hectares upon hectares of land have been expropriated to build roads and resorts... evicting hundreds of Ata-Manobo families from their lands and livelihoods." AB

From page 4

explain... It's not their fault that they have been bombarded by misrepresentations and clichés in the mainstream media. Sometimes it's hard and the 'minority stress' gets to you, but that's what cultural revolution is about, right?" she says with a knowing smile.

Ka Nica also shares the usual misconception that being a butch lesbian like her is just a phase. "Or that I just haven't met the right man yet, and that I could still change. I patiently explain that Marxism teaches us that change is determined by internal laws. I believe that gender orientation is an internal precept of every human being that external conditions, such as 'the right man,' can do very little to change one's attraction to others."

Now married with another woman Red fighter for almost three years, Ka Nica still remembers that long ago courtship dance with fondness. "Kinikilig pa rin ako" (I still get tickled pink), she says, laughing. It is during that moment and many others like it that she is proud she is a lesbian in the NPA and the revolutionary movement." AB

Quezon City flood victims demand aid. Residents of Barangay Tatalon, Quezon City trooped to the DSWD's office last July 18 to demand food and aid. Their community was submerged in neck-deep floods last July 16.

Power crisis in Mindoro. Scores of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro residents marched to the town center on the evening of July 16 to condemn the local electric cooperative's failure to provide proper services causing hardships brought about power interuptions. They plan to march every night over five days. They are experiencing 12- to 14-hour daily power interruptions.

Safe in-person learning, now. Members of the Kabataan Partylist and ACT Teachers Partylist protested in front of Congress last July 18 to demand necessary measures for the safe resumption of face-to-face classes in November. Earlier, teachers criticized plans to reschedule in-person classes.

"Atin ang Pinas!" protests in Laguna and Manila Bay. Fisherfolk members of Pamalakaya held a fluvial protest in Laguna and Manila Bay last July 12 by way of marking the 6th anniversary of the arbitral ruling favoring the Philippine case against Chinese incursions in the West Philippine Sea.

Duterte's legacy to Marcos: Destructive reclamation projects

During his first days in power, Ferdinand Marcos Jr vetoed the bill that would create an economic zone in Bulacan where San Miguel Corporation's (SMC) grand Aerotropolis project is set to be constructed. He said the contract put the state at a disadvantage. In reality, he only wanted to renegotiate the project to his advantage. Two days after he blocked the bill, it was re-filed in the Senate by his sister Imee Marcos.



The ₱736-billion Aerotropolis project is one of the destructive, unscientific and anti-people projects that the Duterte regime handed over to Marcos. Other major projects in the application stage are the Sangley Point International Airport Reclamation Project (1,900 hectares) of the Remullas, the 1,500-acre plan of SM Prime Holdings in the Cordova coast in Cebu and the Cavite Province Land Reclamation and Development Project of the Revillas (1,332 hectares) awarded to Century Peak Corporation, a company owned by Duterte's supporter Wilfredo Keng.

In addition, 120 projects at various levels of application, design and implementation are currently being handled by the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA). About 50 are in Manila Bay.

Bureaucrat and bourgeoisie collusion

"Not in my time," Rodrigo Duterte replied in 2020 when asked about his regime's policy on reclamation. In the name of anti-corruption, he renegotiated the terms of various projects to squeeze kickbacks. Prior to this, he put the PRA under the office of the president to centralize the collection of bribes. At the end of his term, he authorized at least 30 reclamation projects. Thirteen are in Manila Bay. One of these, the Pasay Harbor City Reclamation Projects of his crony Dennis Uy and their Chinese contractor, is already under way. The biggest of the projects is the 650-hectare Navotas City Coastal Bay Reclamation Project of Argonbay Construction Company, owned by his "good friend," SMC's Ramon Ang.

According to a PRA report, five projects have already been given notice to commence actual reclamation (four in Manila Bay, one in Mandaue, Cebu), eight were given notice to proceed (five in Manila Bay and one each in Batangas, Samar and Minglanilla in Cebu) and 14 have signed agreements with local governments (four in Manila Bay, three in Cebu, two in Cagayan and one each in Batangas, Southern Leyte, Iloilo, Palawan and Surigao del Sur.) In total, 4,500 hectares of land in the form of islands and bay extensions will be reclaimed.

Most of the contracts were directly awarded by Duterte to his favored compradors and allies. Aside from Ang and Uy, Duterte awarded the Pasay Reclamation Project (360 hectares) to the Sy family. He allowed the Gatchalians' Manila Waterfront City Reclamation Project to proceed, as well as the Romero's Mandaue City North Reclamation and Development Project and the Leviste's Batangas Port Reclamation Project. Duterte also allowed the reclamation of Horizon Manila by the Legaspi family, one of the largest private government contractors involved in anomalous projects under the former president Gloria Arroyo. The Manila City of Pearl Project of the UAA Kinming owned by his Chinese supporter Kitson Soriano Kho was also given the green light.

Outside the PRA, other applications include reclamation projects in Dumaguete City and another related to the Laguna Lakeshore Expressway project.

Contrary to touted projections of hundreds of thousands of new jobs, these projects generate only contractual, temporary and low-level employment for Filipinos. This is because almost all contracts use foreign companies—from designing to dredging to actual laying of islands. These include the China Harbor Engineering Company, a subsidary of the China Communications Construction Company, the same company behind illegal reclamation operations in the West Philippine Sea. *(First part)* AB

The Coco Levy Fund swindle

In the late 1970s, widespread peasant protests broke out over the US-Marcos I dictatorship's fraudulent Coco Levy Fund. To pacify the peasant masses' militant rising, Marcos ordered the suspension of the levy collection on September 17, 1980.

It failed to placate the enraged coconut farmers. They could not accept how billions upon billions of peses were taken from them by the dictator in collusion with coconut farm landlords.

On February 1, 1981, a few days before Pope John Paul II's visit to Manila, 6,000 coconut farmers from five towns of Quezon launched a protest. As they assembled in the plaza of Guinayangan town, soldiers from the Philippine Constabulary opened fire. Two were killed and up to a thousand were injured. The same violence was repeated on July 14 that year when soldiers attacked hundreds of coconut farmers who were protesting in Daet, Camarines Norte. Seven were killed and more than 20 were injured.

Despite the violent response of the fascist state, protests continued nationwide until Marcos Sr finally suspended the coco levy collection on September 11, 1983. Since then, coconut farmers have struggled to recover the billions of pesos stolen from them.

What is the coco levy fund?

The coco levy is a series of taxes imposed under the US-Marcos dictatorship that squeezed coconut farmers dry like grated coconut. The proceeds were supposedly to create a fund aimed at "developing the livelihood" of the country's coconut farmers and the coconut industry.

The opposite happened. Marcos and his cronies pocketed and looted the levies. Among them were Juan Ponce Enrile (then the Minister of Defense and now Marcos Jr's legal adviser), Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and Maria Clara Lobregat, a big landlord and coconut big business owner from Zamboanga.

Levy collection began on June 17, 1971 at the rate of ₱0.55 per 100 kilograms of copra (equivalent to ₱38.45 in 2020). The fund was then managed by the Philippine Coconut Federation, Inc., the largest organization of coconut businesses.

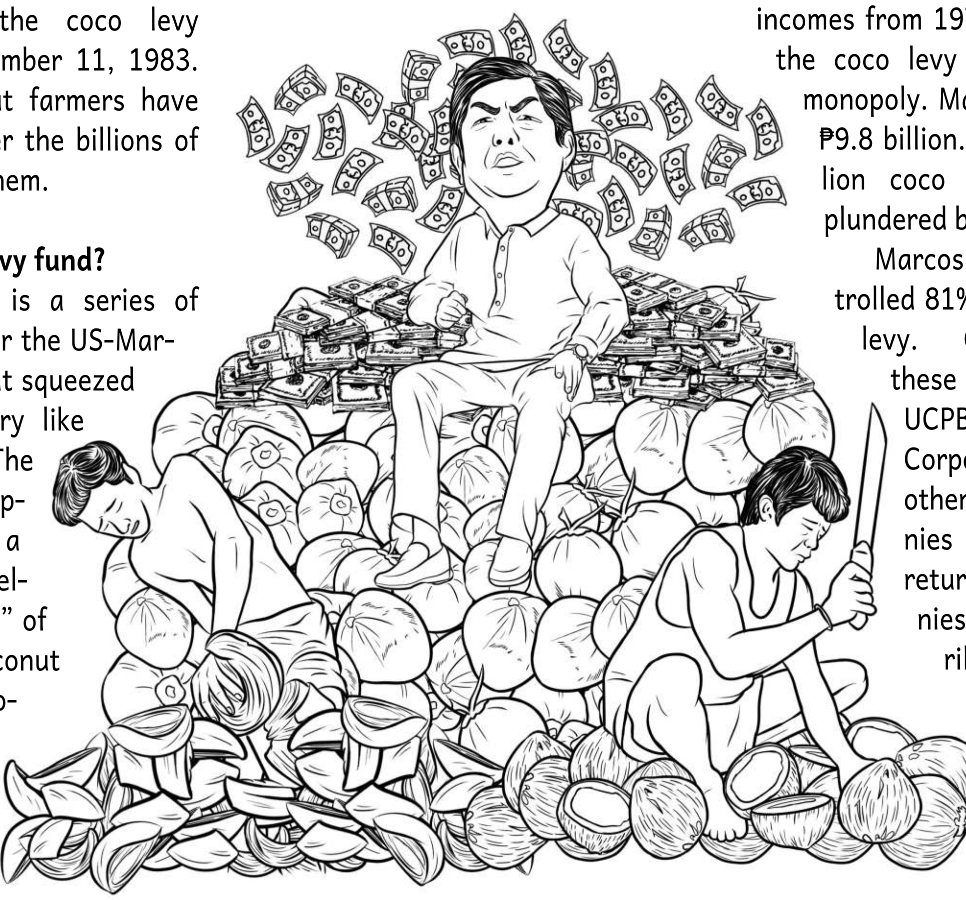
Under martial law, the dictator repeatedly swindled the coconut farmers. On June 30, 1973, Marcos Sr issued PD 232 which formed the Philippine Coconut Authority (Philcoa) and installed Enrile as president. In August 1973, the Coconut Consumers' Stabilization Fund (CCSF) was formed and an additional ₱15 per 100 kilograms of copra was levied against coconut farmers. These coconut levies were then invested in private companies. Up to ₱100 million per month went to compradors, exporters and other big coconut businesses. On November 14 of the same year, the Coconut Industry Development Fund was formed to collect another ₱20 per 100 kilograms of copra.

Squeezing farmers

On July 29, 1975, Marcos issued PD 755 to authorize Philcoa to buy 64.98% of the shares of the First United Bank using the coco levy fund. From this was established the United Coconut Planter's Bank (UCPB) with Cojuangco getting 7.2% shares and Marcos Sr getting 10%. Cojuangco was made bank president. In 1978, United Coconut Oil Mills was formed which controlled 97% of all coconut industry.

According to estimates of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, coconut farmers lost 42% of their incomes from 1979 to 1982 due to the coco levy and the coconut monopoly. Marcos Sr. pocketed ₱9.8 billion. Overall, ₱150 billion coco levy funds were plundered by his cronies.

Marcos Sr's cronies controlled 81% of collected coco levy. Cojuangco used these funds to buy the UCPB, the San Miguel Corporation and 14 other coconut companies (he died without returning the companies). Meanwhile, Enrile used the coco levy to buy Primex Coco, Pacific Royal, Clear Minerals and more. AB

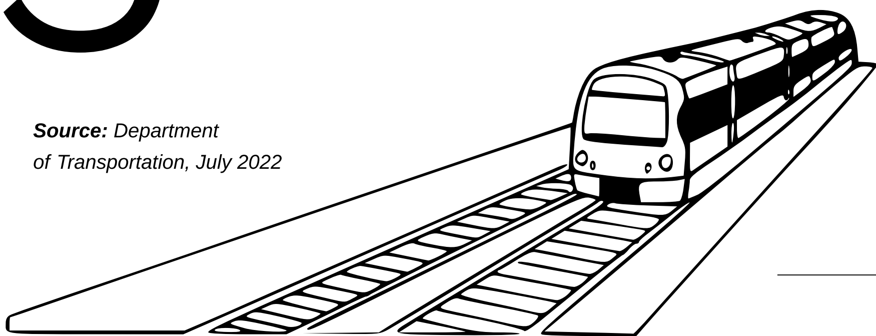


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3

train system projects (Calamba to Bicol, Tagum-Davao-Digos, and Clark to Subic) were not delivered because China never approved loan applications.



Source: *Department of Transportation, July 2022*

60%

of workers around the world receive wages lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Source: *UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, June 2022*

June 12, 2016

the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, The Netherlands decided in favor of the Philippine case versus Chinese incursions in the country's sovereign territory in the West Philippine Sea.

₱0.87



value of the peso today compared to its 2018 value.

12

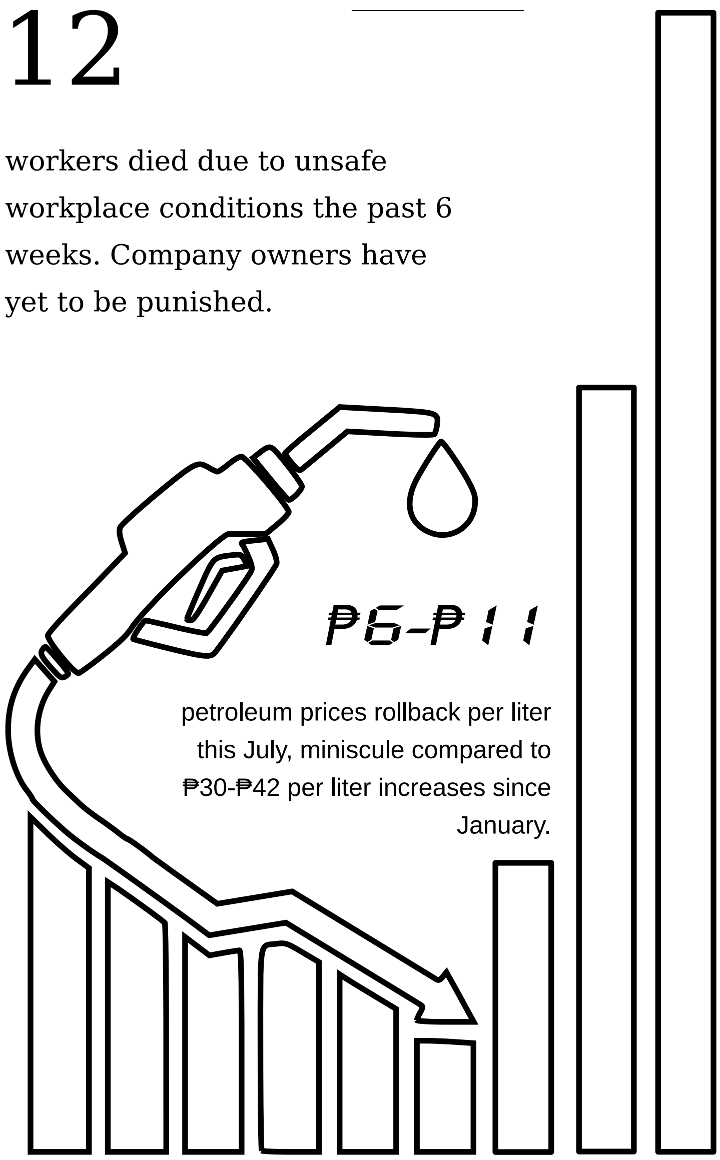
workers died due to unsafe workplace conditions the past 6 weeks. Company owners have yet to be punished.

₱9.35 M



cost of Ferdinand Marcos Jr's watch worn during inaugurationn, followed later by three luxurious banquets in Malacañang in his first 5 days.

Patek Philippe Nautilus 5980R-001 18k rose gold



₱6-₱11

petroleum prices rollback per liter this July, miniscule compared to ₱30-₱42 per liter increases since January.

₱14.8 B

amount that government says it can save under the **"rightsizing" plan—the firing of thousands of contractual government employees.**

Mammoth protests oust Sri Lanka's president



Hundreds of thousands of outraged Sri Lankans stormed and seized President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's palace in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo last July 9. The storming of the palace is a high point in the four-month protest actions in the face of intensified economic crisis, hunger and poverty in Sri Lanka.

Rajapaksa was forced to vacate his palace on the same day and officially resigned from office last July 14. Similar to 1986 scenes of how people drove Ferdinand Marcos Sr out of Malacañang, Rajapaksa hurriedly left in a military airplane to Maldives on July 13. He flew to Singapore the following day.

News reports show the ordinary citizens of Sri Lanka celebrating. They entered the extravagant palace, ate in its kitchen, laid on the president's bed, jumped into the swimming pool and used the expensive facilities.

Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda was forced to resign as prime minister last May 10. He was replaced by the family's close ally Ranil Wickremesinghe. The mammoth protest ended the Rajapaksa's 2-decade rule of Sri Lanka.

The Rajapaksa family are like the Marcoses of the Philippines. They lived in luxury while people suffered from hunger and hardships. They are responsible for the genocidal war during the early 2000s which killed almost 40,000 Tamil minorities.

The Gota Go Home movement which later became Gota Go to Jail became the central call of the protests. The campaign is now transformed to Ranil Go Home after the Rajapaksa's ally Wickremesinghe was appointed interim president last July 14.

Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency on the same day and threatened to violently disperse the demonstrations which police refused to do. The courts also refused to release arrest warrants for the demonstrators.

What happened in Sri Lanka?

The powerful mass movement took shape primarily due to the failed response of the Rajapaksa government to the economic crisis resulting from massive unpayable external debt and the near-depletion of its foreign exchange reserves. It was exacerbated by large-scale corruption, imposition of destructive economic policies, overconcentration of political power and the government's failed pandemic response.

Sri Lanka's $55 billion external debt was 69% of the country's total gross domestic product. Part of it funded fancy infrastructure projects that were claimed to jump-start the economy.

The country defaulted on its external debt last April making application for new loans difficult. Restrictions under the Covid-19 pandemic caused massive dislocations in tourism, shrinking of textile exports, as well as coconut products and others (which relied mainly on imported materials), and reduction of foreign remittances from migrant workers.

As a result, the country's foreign exchange reserves, used to pay for imported oil, food, milk and medicines, was almost depleted. This choked local agricultural and industrial production, caused large-scale power outages and the skyrocketing of prices. In addition, the value of the country's rupee (LKR) against the dollar dropped by 77% from LKR203 to LRK360 to the dollar during the first months of the year.

This resulted in extreme supply shortages of basic commodities. Millions suffered form long queues to buy basic food, kerosene (used for cooking) and gasoline. Inflation rose to 122% in June.

The Communist Party of the Philippines expects this would not be the last mass uprising across the world as peoples confront worsening socioeconomic conditions.

US sanctions against Russia exacerbate the global food crisis

Even before war broke out in Ukraine, a global food crisis was already in the offing due to pandemic trade restrictions, adverse effects of climate change and rising oil prices and natural gas prices. This global crisis was pushed to the brink by sanctions one-sidedly imposed by the US on Russia.

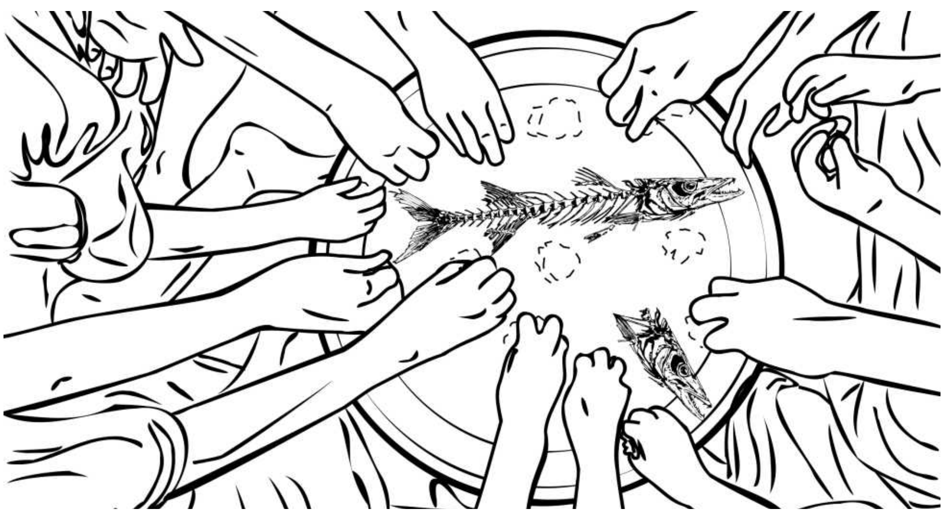
Sanctions are trade and investment measures applied against a target country. There are currently 11,000 individual US sanctions against Russia. These target the ruble and trade, Russian banks and companies, production and exports of oil and natural gas, large-scale farms, ships, airplanes and trucks, the technology sector and even the Russian media. Russia considers these as a direct attack and a declaration of war against the Russian people.

There are no sanctions directly on agricultural products and its exports but trade is hampered by the sanctions' domino effect. Russia cannot freely export its products even to countries which do not support the sanctions.

Russia is one of the largest food exporters in the world. It exports almost a fifth or 18% of the global wheat supply, three times larger than Ukraine's. According to the United Nations, 36 countries import more than 50% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine.

Moreover, over 20% of the global supply of key fertilizer components come from Russia (15.4%) and Belarus (5%), which is also under US sanctions. Russia supplies up to 40% of potash and other nitrogen-based fertilizers. Fertilizer prices have already been rising before the Ukraine war due to the increase in oil prices. It further rose due to US sanctions against the two countries.

Many consider restrictions on fertilizer supply and trade as the "biggest threat to the food system." This is because it affects all farmers. This will bring down production of all crops, not just wheat. This will also bankrupt many farmers, especially in backward countries, as prices of remaining fertilizer in the market will shoot up.



Worsening shortage and rising food prices

Even now, major exporters have started reducing food exports to ensure local supplies. Last May, India suspended its wheat and sugar exports. In April, Indonesia announced that it will temporarily stop exporting palm oil. Russia has slowed down food exports to neighboring countries also to protect local supply. The impact of the sanctions will be most felt on the next harvests. Many farmers are forced to reduce production as fertilizer supply tightens and prices increase. In the Philippines, prices of a sack of fertilizer have doubled from ₱1,436.21 in 2021 to ₱2,943.63 this year. As a result, farmers will be further burdened with high production costs. Even large commercial farms are worried that they cannot reach target production because their produce is dependent on fertilizers.

People in industrialized countries are not exempt from skyrocketing oil and food prices. They face rising cost of living as wages could not keep up with rising prices of basic commodities. In the UK, food inflation is estimated to reach 20% next year. Food inflation has already hit "historical highs" in the US (10.4%), France (6.4%), Japan (4.7%) and Germany (12.7%). AB